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ABSTRACT

Although research on acquaintance, or date rape, dates back to the late 1950's, only recently has the literature in this area focused on prevention. In addition, although research has shown that, conservatively, 1 out of 10 women on university campuses has been raped by someone with whom she is familiar, little appears to have been done about the problem in terms of widespread, well-funded prevention programs. The present review of the literature on acquaintance rape focuses on five areas: (1) the incidence of acquaintance rape on college campuses; (2) research into aspects of the perpetrator; (3) research examining aspects of the victim; (4) factors outside of either the perpetrator or victim that may be associated with date rape, and lastly (5) studies examining the efficacy of prevention programs. (Contains 32 references.) (Author)

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Acquaintance Rape on College Campuses: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract

Although research on acquaintance, or date rape, dates back to the late 1950's, only recently has the literature in this area focused on prevention. In addition, although research has shown that, conservatively, one out of 10 women on university campuses has been raped by someone with whom she is familiar, little appears to have been done about the problem in terms of widespread, well-funded prevention programs. The present review of the literature on acquaintance rape focuses on five areas: the incidence of acquaintance rape on college campuses, research into aspects of the perpetrator, research examining aspects of the victim, factors outside of either the perpetrator or victim that may be associated with date rape, and lastly studies examining the effecacy of prevention programs.

Acquaintance, or date rape, was only really recognized as a problem on college campuses within the last decade. Likewise, although research in this area was performed as early as the 1950's, only recently have their been a noteworthy number of studies done on acquaintance rape. These studies vary in their focus, and research on acquaintance rape can be broken down into five major areas: studies of the incidence of date rape, research focusing on victim variables, research focusing on perpetrator variables, research examining prevention or treatment programs, and lastly research examining secondary and social factors that influence acquaintance rape. The present literature review will examine some of the more important studies done in each of these five areas. The present review is also delimited to literature on rapes against women perpetrated by men, although there is certainly other literature also available, such as literature about rapes of men perpetrated by women (cf. Anderson & Thompson, 1990).

Prevalence of Acquaintance Rape

Compared to other types of crime, rape in general is underreported by its victims, and acquaintance rape even more so. As Koss, Gidycz and Wisniewski (1987) point out, statistics put out by government and law enforcement agencies frequently underreport rape due to poor methodology on the part of the these studies, and the fact that many women are reticent to go to law enforcement to report rape and to bring up charges against the perpetrator, especially in the case of date rape, where the victim frequently has a social connection with the perpetrator (the rapist was a friend, a fellow member of a group, etc.). To get a better idea of the incidence of sexual aggression on university campuses, Koss, Gidycz and Wisniewski (1987) performed a major study using a sample of 6,159 college students from across the United States using a self-report instrument. The results showed that 27.5% of the women in this sample

reported being raped, and 7.7% of the male respondents reported perpetrating a rape. It should be noted that this study did not differentiate between acquaintance and stranger rape, and that the questionnaire focused on sexual aggression after the age of 14, so many in the sample may have been raped or have perpetrated a rape before they entered college (Koss, Gidycz & Wisniewski, 1987).

Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) performed a study focusing on the risk factors associated not only with rape but with sexual aggression in general. The study limited itself to dating situations, and thus gives a better idea of the incidence of acquaintance rape on college campuses. The sample consisted of about 700 undergraduate students at a major southwestern university, who were given a battery of instruments including a sexual aggression questionnaire and several scales measuring attitudes (especially attitudes on women and rape). Roughly 65.1% of the female undergraduates reported experiencing some form of sexual aggression while at the university, with 14.7% reporting being raped (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). These two studies are typical of the literature on the prevalence of acquaintance rape on college campuses in that the incidence of date rape in these studies tends to fall between 10-30% of university women, with the rate of sexual assault (incidences of all sexual aggression against the victim's will, even if the incident did not include intercourse of any kind) averaging near the 50% mark (Kanin, 1957; Kanin & Parcell, 1977; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957; Koss, 1985; Koss, Gidycz & Wisniewski; Koss, Leonard, Beezley & Oros, 1985; Koss & Oros, 1982; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). Thus, it can be stated that, at the very least, one out of 10 university women have been raped by someone they know, making acquaintance rape a major problem on university campuses.

Aspects of the Date Rapist

There is a great debate over the question of whether a rapist is driven by sexual frustration or by the need to dominate and hurt a victim, in other words, is the rapist driven by the sex drive, or a drive for power and dominance (the "power-aggression" model)? The power-aggression model, which is supported by a number of researchers (Briere & Malamuth, 1983; Brownmiller, 1975; Malamuth, Check & Briere, 1986) implicates attitudes that women are inferior as rationalizing male aggression against women. It should be noted, however, that this model was based on research that did not differentiate between stranger and acquaintance rape, and was developed from research done almost exclusively on stranger rapists.

Kanin (1985) found that, in a group of 71 self-disclosed undergraduate date rapists, that these men were much more sexually experienced compared to the control group of 227 undergraduate males. The rapists averaged having sex twice as often as the control group, and were very sexually active. Kanin (1985) theorized that these results are due to the fact that these men take a predatory, exploitive and seductive approach towards women. Date rapists were three times more likely to try to get a woman intoxicated, falsely profess love, falsely promise engagement/marriage, or to threaten to terminate the relationship in order to have sex with the woman that were controls (Kanin, 1985). Kanin (1985) thus hypothesized that date rapists tend to be "hypersexual" males who have high aspiration levels, partly due to their high success in achieving sex, and, when their expectation of sex is not met, are more likely to rape. Thus, date rapists may be a distinct, separate group from stranger rapists, in terms of their motivation for raping and their personality variables. The "power-aggression" model of the rape perpetrator may not be accurate in the case of the date rapist, although Kanin (1985) agreed that

attitudinal/ideological "belief system" of sexually coercive males plays a major role in date rape.

Rapaport and Burkhart (1994) studied a sample of 201 male undergraduates using several personality, attitudinal and self-report instruments, attempting to identify characteristics of sexually coercive males. The findings indicated that attitudinal measures (measuring attitudes towards women and rape) did not predict those who reported sexually coercive acts. This result is not congruent with those of Costin's (1985) study of a large sample of college males using attitudinal scales. Costin (1985) found that traditional attitudes towards women were highly correlated with belief in "rape myths" (such as "a woman who says 'no' is really saying 'yes'") which endorse the use of sexually coercion and even force against women. Thus, the Rapaport and Burkhart (1994) study did not find evidence that more traditional males were more likely to use sexual coercion. Two scales taken from the California Personality Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1957), the Re (responsibility) and So (socialization) scales, were useful in predicting sexual coercion, with low scores in each being correlated with reports of using sexually coercive methods. According to Rapaport and Burkhart (1984), low scores in these two scales indicate an individual who is irresponsible, immature, anti-social and not socially conscious.

Greendlinger and Byrne (1987) found in a sample of 114 undergraduate males a positive correlation between reporting coercive sexual fantasies and indicating that they would rape a woman if they were assured they would not be caught or punished. Rape myth acceptance and aggressive tendencies were also correlated with reports of coercive sexual fantasies.

Based on research, theory, and data collected from a large sample of college men (N=2,652), Koss, Malamuth, Sockloskie, and Tanaka (1991) constructed a model of aggressive (sexually and non-sexually) males. For sexually aggressive males, the model posits that

environmental factors in the males' family of origin contributes to delinquency and use of coercion (the latter possibly learned through modeling of other family members in the dysfunctional household). Delinquency and use of coercion leads to sexual promiscuity which in turn leads to sexual aggression, along with the development of a hostile attitude towards women (Koss, Malamuth, Sockloskie & Tanaka, 1991). However, since the sample was a mix of males who aggressed against women in general (sexually and non-sexually), it is hard to determine how much of the model applies to the date rapist as opposed to stranger rapists, sexually coercive males, and males who aggressed non-sexually.

Aspects of the Acquaintance Rape Victim

In one of the first research studies on date rape, Kanin (1957) found that frequency of dating, number of men dated and religious participation did not differentiate university women who had been sexually assaulted from those who were not. Kanin (1957) did find that women who reported not being sexually assaulted were more likely to have an older male sibling. He theorized that an older brother may inform his sister about male sexual aggressiveness and exploitation, which may make such sisters more wary of men and situations that may lead to sexual assault (Kanin, 1957). Parental advice and warnings on sex were also found to be associated with not being offended, and women who reported being sexually assaulted also tended to be younger than the perpetrator (Kanin, 1957).

This study was repeated 20 years later to determine if any noteworthy change in the earlier findings occurred (Kanin & Parcell, 1977). This study found that those women who had reported being victims of sexual assault within a year of the study were more likely to be previous victims than those who did not report sexual assault within that year. In other words, they tended to be

habitual victims of sexual assault (Kanin & Parcell, 1977). Sexual history in terms of virginity did not separate the offended from the non-offended women, but the offended women reported a higher incidence of sexually offending a previous male date. Results also showed that many of the sexual assaults were not preceded by any type of foreplay beyond kissing, this being especially true if the offense was great (i.e., rape) (Kanin & Parcell, 1977).

Attempting to determine what characteristics separate rape victims from controls, Myers, Templer, and Brown (1894) looked at five different areas: psychosocial competency, mental health, alcohol/drug use, cognitive resources, and physical ability. Their sample consisted of 72 rape victims (no differentiation between date or stranger rape) with a matching set of controls. The best predictor was psychosocial competency, as measured by several scales of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1957), with the rape victims scoring lower on measures of dominance, social presence, achievement via independence and assertiveness. Rape victims also had a higher likelihood of previous drug/alcohol abuse as compared to controls (Myers, Templer & Brown). The authors contended that a woman with these attributes is likely to do what others want her to and to be non-assertive, thus increasing her likelihood of being raped. The other measures were not found to differ across between the victims and controls. One problem with this study, however, is that the rape victims' lower scores are likely due in part to being raped. Lastly, there is the question of whether results obtained from studies of stranger rape victims apply to acquaintance rape victims.

Koss, Dinero, Seibel and Cox (1988) compared the experiences of stranger rape victims to victims of acquaintance rape using a sample of female undergraduate rape victims. They found that both groups were similar in terms of having been intoxicated at the time of the assault,

psychological symptoms due to the assault, and amount of resistance used. Stranger rape victims were more likely to have experienced a greater degree of aggression and fear, and were more likely to place more of the responsibility for the rape on the perpetrator than were acquaintance rape victims. Stranger rape victims were also more likely to tell others about the incident and to have sought help (legal and psychological) after the attack. A little less than half of the acquaintance rapes involved the same perpetrator raping multiple times. Thus, it appears that acquaintance rape victims may be more psychologically harmed than stranger rape victims, mainly due to the victims blaming themselves, not interpreting the assault as rape, continuing contact with the perpetrator (by continuing to date the perpetrator, etc.), and not seeking legal and psychological help (Koss, Dinero, Seibel & Cox, 1988).

Other Factors

Secondary factors that appear to influence the occurrence of acquaintance rape include alcohol use, cultural and social aspects that promote rape, and pornography use by perpetrators. Research in these areas has grown, especially in the area of cultural and social elements that appear to promote date rape. Burt (1980) describes several of these social elements, the most important being the "rape myth", a "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false belief" that supports sexual aggression against women. Examples of rape myths include "only bad girls get raped", "any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to", and "women ask for it" (Burt, 1980). Sexually conservative attitudes, adversarial sexual beliefs, and acceptance of violence in relationships are theorized to be associated with acceptance of rape myths, based on research results showing that high scores on measures of sexually conservative attitudes, an adversarial view of the opposite sex, and acceptance of violence in relationships were correlated with a high

scores on measures of rape myth acceptance (Burt, 1980). These attitudes, coupled with rape myths, lead to what Burt (1980) and others (Brownmiller, 1975) have described as a "rape culture" where popularly held attitudes and beliefs foster a climate that promotes rape. Check and Malamuth (1983) performed a study which suggests that individuals with a higher degree of sex role stereotyping had greater arousal reactions when given dipictions of acquaintance rapes than those who did not score as high on measures of sex-role stereotyping. Thus, certain attitudes and beliefs, many of which appear prevalent in our culture (and likely even more prevalent in the college "sub-culture"), appear to play a major role in acquaintance rape.

Alcohol also appears to have a major influence on acquaintance rape. Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) found heavy alcohol use associated with a greater likelihood of sexual assault for undergraduates. Furthermore, when date-rape scenarios presented to undergraduates included alcohol use by the perpetrator, he was blamed less (Richardson & Campbell, 1982). Conversely, if the victim was drunk, she was assigned a greater degree of fault for the rape than when she was described as sober in the scenarios, and her character was also downgraded more (Richardson & Campbell, 1982). These prevalent attitudes towards alcohol and rape further bolster rape myths involving alcohol, possibly promote intoxication (of the potential victim, perpetrator, or both) as a tactic for sexual assault, and may lead the victim not to report the incident.

There have been no published studies to date directly examining pornography use and acquaintance rape, but many studies have been done of the effects of pornography on aggression towards women. Results tend to indicate that non-violent pornography does not lead to an increase in aggressiveness, but violent pornography can (especially if viewed frequently) (Check & Guloien, 1989). For example, Crossman (1994) found that pornography use, especially

frequent use of violent pornography, was associated with higher scores on sexual aggression measures in college men. A problem with this study, however, is that it is not clear if males who are sexually aggressive use violent pornography or if the violent pornography leads to a greater degree of sexual aggressiveness (causality is not clear).

Intervention Programs

Research into the effectiveness of acquaintance rape prevention programs on university campuses has only recently been a focus in the literature. Frazier, Valtinson, and Candell (1994) developed and tested a two hour program for undergraduate fraternity/sorority members using interactive improvisational theater based on Parrot's (1988) Acquaintance Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Manual. In the intervention group, date rape scenarios were acted out and afterwards a discussion on date rape and its prevention was initiated, whereas the control group did not experience the prevention program. The intervention group showed less acceptance of rape myths and a lower degree of sex-role stereotyping. Statistically significant differences between pre-intervention scores on attitudes towards dating, gender role beliefs, sexual behaviors and the program itself were present in the intervention group immediately following the program, but failed to be statistically significant at a one-month follow up (Frazier, Valtinson & Candell, 1994).

Rosenthal, Heesacker and Neimeyer (1995) tested an intervention program lasting one hour on a large group of undergraduates. The intervention was one used successfully in a study by Gilbert, Heesacker, and Gannon (1991) which showed that a relatively brief (one-hour) presentation consisting of arguments against violence, rape myths, adversarial sexual beliefs and male dominance was effective in changing participants' attitudes in these areas among a group of

male undergraduates. Rosenthal, Heesacker and Neimeyer (1995) sought to improve on that study by including in the sample women and students with a high level of sex role stereotyping (and were thus considered to be at a higher risk to be involved in a date rape incident). Results showed that those in the intervention group had less rape supportive attitudes and showed less acceptance of rape myths (Rosenthal, Heesacker & Neimeyer, 1995).

Differences in the effect of such intervention programs between male and female participants were explored in another study (Heppner, Good, Hillenbrand-Gunn, Hawkins, Hacquard, Nichols, DeBord & Brock, 1995). The variables tested were rape myth acceptance, adversarial sexual beliefs, how relevant the participant felt the subject material was to them, and attention to peripheral cues. This last measure was thought to be relevant because, based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Caccioppo, 1991, 1996) the women in the sample would be theorized to pay attention to the central cues of the presentation, because they would find them more relevant than the male participants, who would be theorized to pay attention more to peripheral cues (such as the expertness or attractiveness of the presenter). Attitude change would more likely be permanent if the central cues of the presentation were attended to rather than the peripheral. Results showed that scores for both men and women participants on measures of rape myth acceptance, while dropping immediately after the intervention, increased at a two month follow up, with the men's scores returning to the pre-intervention level (Heppner et al., 1995). The intervention had a greater effect on women's scores than men's scores, with women reporting more cognition over the program and finding the program to be more personally relevant than did the male participants. Men paid more attention to peripheral cues than did women (rather than focusing on the central themes of the presentation)

and the authors' theorized that this is what led to their attitude change not lasting long (Heppner et al., 1995).

Discussion

Based on the research literature addressing acquaintance rape, we can come up with some conclusions and recommendations for future research. Incidence studies show the magnitude of the problem and indicate that universities need to better deal with this problem that affects roughly one-fifth of female college students (nearly one-half of all female students if one includes all forms of sexual assault). Since the scope and nature of the problem have been readily identified, further research into the prevalence of date rape appears unnecessary, with the exception of the occasional study to note trends in the occurrence and nature of acquaintance rape.

The research to date on male perpetrators of date rape indicates that a male who is likely to commit this act tends to hold to a traditional, or "conservative" stance with regard to sex roles, with rigid sex role stereotypes being enforced by these individuals. Highly dominant, these males tend to be successful sexually, and thus "expect" to have intercourse in certain scenarios and are likely to react with force if expectations are not met. These men are likely to be older and have a higher status socially than their potential victims. Further research into aspects of college men who commit date rape is critical to furthering research into other areas, such as prevention programs, for if we can gain a better idea of what groups of males are at "high risk" for committing acquaintance rape, then prevention programs can be targeted to those groups. Studies determining which groups of men are at high risk thus appear necessary, but are lacking in

the literature. Research into developing models of the development of men who are likely to commit this offense has begun, but these models need to be further tested and elaborated.

Much the same can be said for research into aspects of the acquaintance-rape victim. An accurate explanation or model of why certain women appear to be at "high risk" for being raped is needed to explain research results, and such a model needs to be tested. Again, determination of specific "target" groups is needed to develop programs better able to serve these groups of women. One example might be to perform a cross-cultural study to determine what ethnic groups may be at high risk. More research into finding out what to target in terms of developmental change to eliminate the attitudes/behaviors/etc. that put these women at high risk is also needed. The research to date indicates that a woman who is likely to be a date-rape victim has likely been sexually assaulted before, may have a low degree of assertiveness, is more likely to use and possibly be abusing drugs/alcohol, and is likely to be younger than her attacker. If sexually assaulted, these women may be less likely to seek counseling or legal assistance. Having an older male sibling may help some women avoid assault, as well as strong parental warnings.

Further research into the affects of pornography use on acquaintance rape incidence is necessary, along with research determining precisely what effect it has on males, especially with regards to likelihood of raping a woman. Alcohol has been shown to be involved a great deal of the time, for both the perpetrator and the victim, and its involvement is likely to change the perception of the perpetrator (less responsibility if he or his victim were intoxicated) and the victim (perceived less favorably and is looked upon as being more deserving of blame if intoxicated). This change in perception may convince the victim she was to blame, or the perpetrator that he was not.

Research into prevention programs has, unfortunately, only recently emerged. Considering that Kanin's first study occurred in 1957, and the first real study of prevention programs did not occur until the late 1980's, research into this area is very late in coming. Fortunately, more researchers are becoming interested in this area. Early studies indicated that prevention programs tend to work only in the short term, at least for males, with many of the studies showing no real attitude (or any other) change at follow up. Determining the best methods to use in such interventions would be a useful focus, especially if a certain program can be shown to be effective at a two month (or greater) follow up. Targeting these prevention programs at university men and finding ways of getting them to see how the topic is personally relevant and important to them is one suggestion. Many men react defensively to such presentations, and finding ways to lower this defensiveness may also benefit prevention programs. As mentioned earlier, focusing these programs on groups defined as "high risk" could also lead to better results. Alcohol-awareness programs could also be coupled with date-rape prevention programs, as alcohol and sexual assault appear to be correlated. Ideally, more research in this area should have as its aim improving prevention programs. Lastly, considering the scope of this problem more prevention programs should be initiated by universities. Fortunately, continuing research into this area should help to determine the best means of combating acquaintance rape, but ultimately it will be up to universities to decide to initiate and actively promote such programs.

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